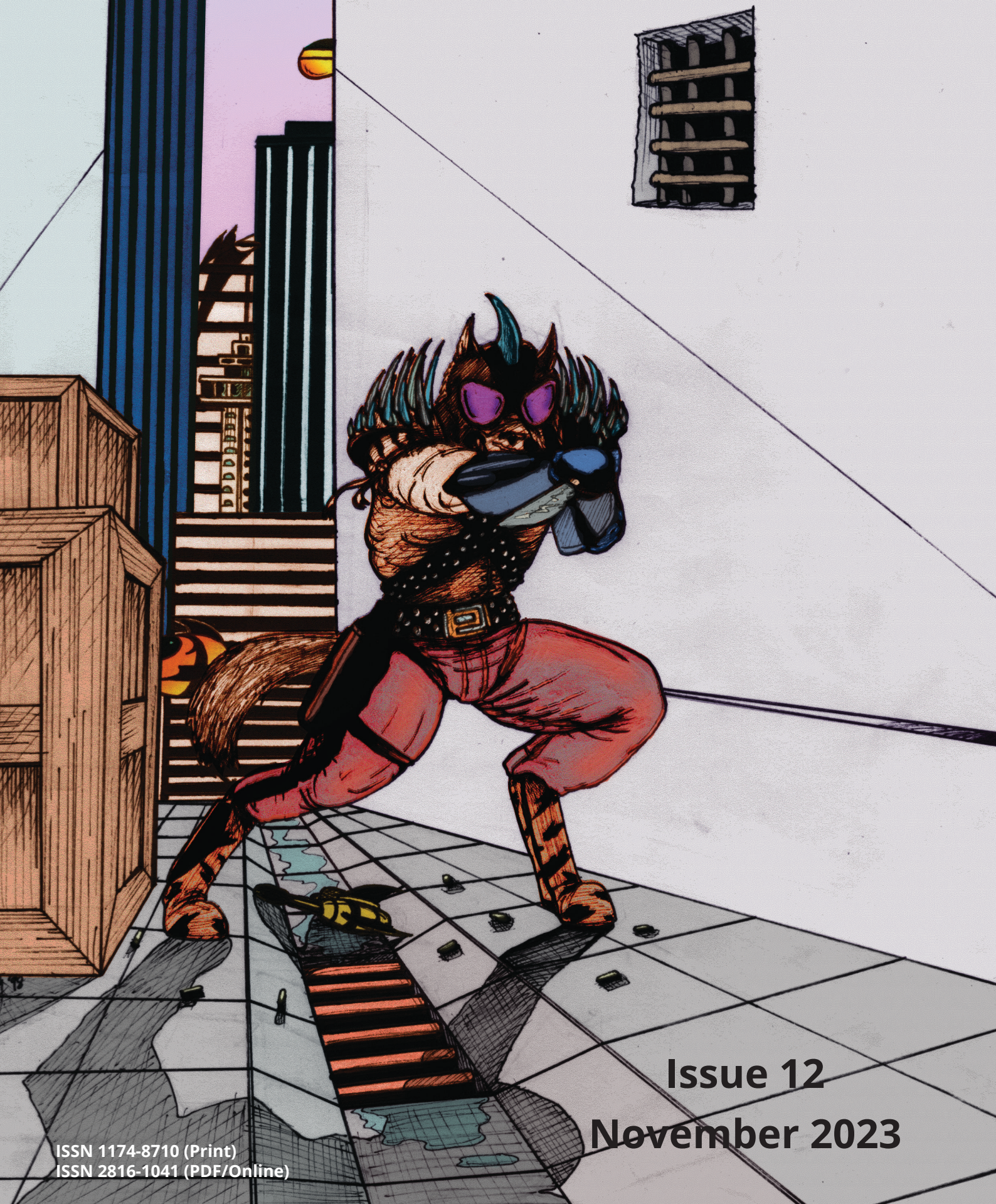


# The Meshan Saga



Issue 12

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# No 12, November 2023

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This issue was typeset in Affinity Publisher 2 (which we moved to recently) and we've encountered many bugs with this software that make it less than a professional tool to use. We apologise for some readability problems with text in this issue.

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# Reflections

Welcome to the 12th issue of *The Meshan Saga*, the New Zealand based fanzine for Traveller roleplaying.

This is another issue release long overdue, but one which has undergone significant change since the original plan for the issue. It was supposed to have a brown and beige duotone style cover to differentiate it from the blue duotones of issue 11. Each subsequent issue was to change the colour palette. Instead I've colourised the artwork to give it more life and make it more acceptable in the 21st century. Not my finest work, but one that should be good enough for this fanzine.

Originally the previous issue 11 was supposed to be assembled back in March of 1997, with issue 12 likely later that year or in early 1998. What happened was that issue 10 was considerably delayed and in the end included all the submissions for 11 and 12 at the time.

It was very early days for us trying to publish things, and FSpaceRPG™ was ramping up and taking a lot of time.

At the time the HIWG NZ mailing list was hosted by Listbot and the website was hosted on Geocities.

The Geocities domain is now owned by Yahoo, and Listbot is owned by Microsoft. Neither run the respective services that once existed on those domains. I recently discussed on FSpaceRPG.com the demise of the WebRing service we also used. A lot has changed in the years that have gone by. The internet is a transient thing, and not a very stable repository of knowledge over a human lifespan.

*The Meshan Saga* issues are available via a number of sources. We just don't know how long lasting their presence will be, especially beyond the lifespans of the authors involved. We'll do our best to keep them alive on a range of services for as long as possible.

Fortunately now we've done our best to keep the issues alive through redaction of content where rights have been withdrawn. There still might be a possibility it might happen again in the future. We do know some of that early material by one author in some of our issues did make it into an official Mongoose publication. It will be interesting to see what they think about these old versions resurfacing.

As for the material written by Philip Warnes that appeared, those not only made it into little Little Black Book formats published by us, but were modernised and made more generic as commercial versions by us. There will be FSpaceRPG™ versions of those with time as well. Many of the concepts I wrote have also appeared in FSpaceRPG™ - so that material will be around for a while.

A lot of the proper artwork made for our doomed Meshan Sector commercial CT project is making its way into our commercial products - even the art from the cover of this fanzine will. Most of the Vargr artwork will feature at some point. The aliens themselves appear as 'spacehounds' in some products. Eventually redone versions of starships will appear - many altered and used for Aronhi ones in FSpaceRPG™. Some may launch under the 'spacehounds' banner in generic supplements one day.

Some are already in use in the generic supplements by Philip Warnes of his earlier work - each being made for that purpose and adapted for the generic form. There is a Vargr as part of the wider Serkur cover picture - but he is cropped out. One day we may publish an art book by Aaron Barlow that could be titled '*The Meshan project that could have been*'. We'll see what we'll do.

# HIWG

# NZ



© 1994 A. Barlow

## **History of the Imperium Working Group New Zealand Branch**

The old group is long gone, and we will no longer promote the group. There are only about 5 of the original HIWG NZ membership still loosely working at FSpace Publications.

We are happy to take enquiries, answer questions, publish an article in this fanzine, and even host articles on the main FSpaceRPG™ website as applicable.

The world has changed significantly since the 1990s, and the need for a dedicated regional group is no longer required.

### **HIWG NZ Webpages**

**<https://www.fspacerpg.com/results.php?meta=hiwg>**

**<https://www.fspacerpg.com/results.php?meta=traveller>**

**<https://www.fspacerpg.com/results.php?meta=meshan>**



# Minor Alien Races in Meshan Sector

None of the main books published in CT, MT or TNE had any mention of minor alien races in the Meshan Sector. However the Hlanssai are mentioned in other published sources.

The sector had a very slow colonisation period during both the First and Second Imperium indicating the sector was not rich in suitable worlds, nor were there a lot of indigenous minor alien races present that might have accelerated trade and commerce initially.

The sector has a good assortment of Chirper and Droyne inhabited worlds. Some of the Droyne have interstellar capabilities exhibited more for defence and trade as Vilani, Solomani and Vargr progressively colonised the region.

Only the Runners and the Minaens are recognised as minor races in the sector by the Imperium, although many Vargr capitalists tend not to consider the Runners as a minor race with sophont rights, leading to many tensions with sophont rights groups.

The Minaens were more developed by the time of contact, and during the New Era have a period where they have shrugged off alien governance and are pursuing their own destiny. They seem like a race that might have achieved interstellar flight on their own in some primitive capacity if they had not been contacted, but do seem to lack the scientific insights and curiosity about certain branches of physics that certain races explored on the road to the jump drive. Some 3rd Imperium scholars had believed as a race they could have flourished into a substantial high technology race, just simply without jump drive. Of course it is all speculation.

Some humans on Gossice have attempted to advocate for minor race status during 3rd Imperium times, but studies of them proved they are simply descendants of Rule of Man Solomani settlers that brought with them fringe cultural practices from Earth and embellished them with psionic based rituals. While never a direct target of the PsionicSuppressions, the local Vilani descended trading houses that rule the urban centres continue to be influenced to suppress these unusual rural people from gaining much control over the planetary government.

During the New Era the influence of the Imperium has long gone, and the regional Isiidi humans (also Solomani descendants) are more interested in cultivating psionic talents, but with a more pragmatic and scientific approach. Neither group quite trusts the other. The Isiidi are better at getting on with all manner of Vargr and other humans groups - leading to them being an emerging force for civilisation in the New Era alongside their allies in the Tokho Union.

The sector contains more polarised Vilani and Solomani descended former colonies from the 1st and 2nd Imperium - and haven't interbred as much as on some of the other frontier regions of the 3rd Imperium. No minor human races have been identified as native to the sector.

Instead many of the human worlds have also had Vargr settlers resulting in cultural evolution on many worlds where Vilani, Solomani and Vargr traditions, language and the like have blended together, not in a uniform manner across the sector, but in differing mixes based on local context. Many human populated worlds bear Vargr names. Those worlds still dominated by humans and in control by human centric governments still bear names from their Vilani or Solomani origins.

On some remote worlds, primitive undeveloped minor races may remain hidden in hinterlands of their worlds, while the turmoil of Vilani, Solomani and Vargr culturally blending and politics has dominated. No evidence exists this is the case, but some scientists hope there might be some out there.



# Dev Treatment of Vargr in Meshan

A topic of interest to any interested in Meshan would be how the Vargr were treated by the HIWG NZ developers. The short answer was not particularly well.

Most of the developers involved were human-o-centric in outlook, and we got landed with Meshan, because that is all we could acquire to work on from HIWG at the time, as opposed to multiple developers trying to work behind other NZ developers who got some subsectors in Yiklerzdanzh Sector from HIWG Australia.

As you'll note with the work of Philip Warnes, he worked on human centric works - and the mention of Vargr was not in a positive light. The significant developer who departed our group early this century also really didn't depict them in a favourable light - painting a broad brush of exploitative behaviour and less than ideal governments.

While Vargr culture certainly has those elements, it isn't all like that. Far from it.

For the New Era I started the premise of the Tokho Union as a Vargr led pocket empire with noble goals and a cooperative attitude, with both sizeable human populations on its own worlds, a willingness to ally and work closely with the humans and aliens of Kisiidi and resist those that plundered civilisation and hold racist attitudes.

These two allies and others within their sphere of influence over time would eventually be the bright light in the sector facing down the racist and fascist pro-human league formed as the Shurgian Empire. It is an ideological face off between polar opposite views. Somewhat fitting given real world events of late.

Tokho represents what has been good and relatively stable in the sector for nearly a thousand years - namely general peaceful co-existence and cultural blending of both Vargr and human cultures.

The adventurous, pioneering and frontier exploring attitudes of early Solomani in the region are a great fit with similar Vargr vibes - both blending to make those humans more outgoing, while the Vargr living and working with them a little bit less chaotic.

Many Vilani never liked the more extroverted Solomani, and many of their worlds actually embraced Vargr as their liberators from the 'Rule of Man'. Many of these worlds benefited from the stability Vilani cultural values imparted on the Vargr, while loosening their own attitudes somewhat.

Vargr played a valuable role in diplomatically brokering various treaties between Vilani and Solomani descended adversaries within the sector over time, and the sector has remained unusually stable for one under the Vargr Extents until the events of the Rebellion, Hard Times and the eventual virus crash. The Vargr during the era of the united 3rd Imperium were more partners and allies than adversaries in Meshan.

Not all tensions are gone, and some festered for a long time. The New Era is about the polarisation of some of those festering historic tensions driving modern behaviours to this devastating situation.

Anyone using Meshan should keep in mind the cultural blending and unity that would have pervaded the sector for a long time - especially if playing in the more modern Traveller universes that scrapped the time line that led to the New Era. But be aware of the undercurrent of some festering issues in pockets in the sector - and what might happen.



# The Traveller/MegaTraveller connection

The following is a short mini article I wrote in July 1990 and was published in the local gaming magazine at the time before I founded The Meshan Saga.

I'm republishing it here to preserve it.

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As most people who have had contact with both systems, will realise, is that both systems share essentially the same background history. The only difference is the fact that MegaTraveller explores about 10 years later than Traveller ever did, in an era where the Imperium is going through a rebellion, hence The Shattered Imperium.

In order to straighten out a few myths that have been circulating around, such as people believing that Traveller 2300 was closely related to Traveller, in fact it has been renamed 2300AD to avoid this confusion, as 2300AD is a completely separate system. MegaTraveller is simply the second edition rules of the entire Traveller system.

In order to show the similarities between the two systems, we must look at the origins of the MegaTraveller rules. First off, the task system was introduced into Traveller by Digest Group Publications, in their products several years before MegaTraveller was released. Sections of the rules such as world/subsector/system generation, animals, trading, character generation and starship combat originate from the Traveller rules, and have only been modified to suit the new task management system, combat and construction rules.

The personal combat system is directly taken from Striker, and modified by the Traveller aspects not previously included, then the task management system was integrated into the combat rules. The construction rules are a mix of Book 8 Robots, Striker and High Guard combined to make a fluid and integrated robot, vehicle and starship construction system. This integrated system has allowed for higher techs, up to 21, and allows combination designs, such as robotic vehicles and starships.

Overall, this hybrid system is more flexible, easier to use and gives most of the vital information required by players or GMs, concerning any area of the rules within easy reach.

For those of you who say "Well, how do I use Traveller products in MegaTraveller?", the answer is to do a bit of work in finding out the conversions required, which should only take a few hours for most of the rules. And for those of you who want to stick with Traveller, it is quite easy for you to use MegaTraveller products in Traveller given some work.

Hopefully this article provides some insight into MegaTraveller for those of you who know little or nothing about MegaTraveller.



# The Meshan Classic Traveller project

Earlier in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, FSpace Publications obtained a commercial licence from Marc Miller to publish some Approved for Use with Traveller books to support Meshan sector for Classic Traveller based on some of our earlier work in the sector during the TNE era we did under HIWG NZ.

As the Director of FSpace Publications, I had hoped such a licence would engage two key members of the team that weren't as engaged in our efforts with FSpaceRPG™, but had been well engaged in TNE Meshan. And it would give other team members a chance to participate as well.

Our proposal focussed on producing 4 planned books:

- Sector book
- Library data
- Ship guide
- An adventure

Work did begin on the project and this article provides a brief explanation of where this project got to and what we have done and are now in the process of undertaking.

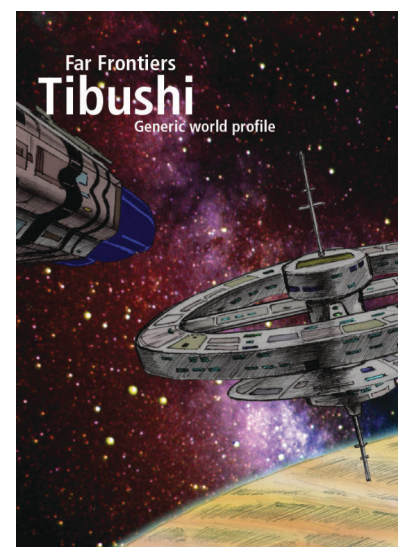
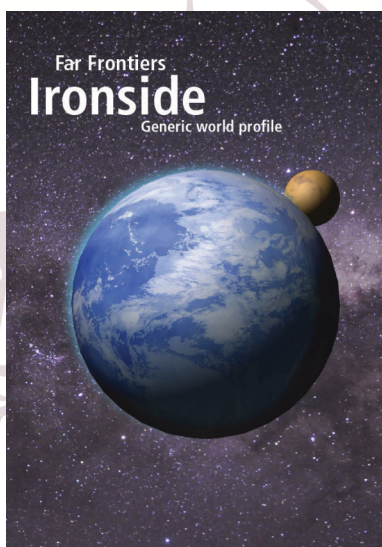
As you might have figured out, the Meshan Classic Traveller project crashed and burned. Differences with the key author for these four books led to his decision to depart from the project and FSpace Publications. He withdrew the rights to his work at his departure. In 20 years that has not changed.

We had hoped to continue, and artwork commissions planned and underway at the time continued, largely done by Aaron Barlow, who did a few items for Meshan TNE about a decade earlier. We still have that art library.

Our second author, Philip Warnes, who was acting as one of our editors, was also a contributor to the TNE era work, was working on RICE paper world write ups with the intention to contribute to these books and add additional book titles to these releases.

Unfortunately at the time we weren't in a position to pivot and deliver alternative materials to plug the hole left by the primary author leaving, and get books to market by the time of the licence expiry. I approached Marc for an extension, but he was busy with Traveller5 at the time. We decided to shelve the project and lose the royalty advance.

But we decided not all was lost and the work from Philip Warnes took another decade before it started to see the light of day. We embarked on bringing to market using a generic universe world book model using Cepheus Engine and/or FSpaceRPG™ rules his worlds from Meshan, as well as more worlds and even starships. Our Far Encounters and Far Frontiers titles largely focus on that work. Specifically for Meshan, three human worlds were delivered by Philip, those being Ironside, Serkur and Tibushi. The covers of these three titles are shown below, and are commercially available, some even using modified versions of some of the art commissioned for the original Meshan Classic Traveller project.





In the last few years, we've released free of charge the original TNE Traveller manuscripts for those three worlds (plus a 4th done by Philip) as Little Black Books (LBBs) in a style similar to Classic Traveller LBBs. Anglir uses Dirtsides II for some vehicle designs, vererring somewhat away from true Traveller roots.

But if you are a Traveller fan and want to combine these free Traveller versions (depicted below) with the commercial titles depicted on the page before, you'll get a better vision for what we might have done commercially.



Savvy collectors may already notice at the time of this fanzine edition publication, that we have released some other Meshan books - some related to the 4 original project books and another for TNE.



The special supplement for TNE about Virus discussions related to two specific HIWG papers presented during our TNE era. One from the departed author (redacted for obvious reasons) and the other from myself. We put it into LBB form and made it freely available. The original TXT documents for both discussion pieces can likely be found on an HIWG file archive if you want to read what the departed author wrote.

You'll also notice that our releases now don't have the Traveller logo on their covers (or inside). We aren't publishing under one of the official publishing schemes, just the normal fair use policy for fan level material, and we've labelled these books as History of the Imperium Working Group New Zealand - which is correct for the team who worked on many of these.

## Meshan Library Data

This is a LBB that we have released already. The original would have focussed on Classic Traveller and have gone through the approval process with Marc Miller. A substantial draft for that was done by the primary author, but was based on the wrong astrographic data for the dateline - so empires and the like being discussed were for the Rebellion era borders, rather than pre-Rebellion CT 3rd Imperium. More on that shortly. That entire original draft is not available. However my own writing for it existed, as were entries from the rest of the team for the Rebellion and TNE eras.

The book you see today includes entries for all 3 eras. We've removed the departed authors original works from the TNE material as much as we recall were his, and wrote a couple of new entries for some key concepts of his. We wanted to ensure room existed for preserve the ideas for the Runners of Khakong and the Dancers of Gossice, so if people do locate his manuscripts from TNE for those, they could use those with our materials he did work on collaboratively with us. We want to make it clear we aren't trying to erase his work on these from history.



## Meshan Sector

This LBB was focussed on 3rd Imperium data. When we took on Meshan for HIWG we received a number of sector data files worked on by differing people based on Mike Mikesh's original work. One file had work agreeing to CT maps and another that agreed with DGP's Vilani and Vargr dot map, borders and empires from the Rebellion era. The one with DGP's borders contained work done by Leroy Guatney ontop of that by Mike Mikesh and Clay Bush. The other file (by Mike Mikesh and Clay Bush only) had borders more closely aligned with early CT era maps of the political boundaries in Meshan, and I reset the date for that, so the two sets covered the two eras. I clearly identified in copies of these files which dates they were for.



Sadly during the development of the original draft of the CT Meshan Sector the primary author used the wrong data file and used Rebellion era data for Meshan from one of the unvalidated data files. He also supplied the Traveller Map project with that same data, and that issue persists still. The community has been operating with the wrong data if they relied on that at the time. Both of the correct sector data files will eventually be loaded to our Internet Archives account for those interested. The pre-Rebellion data is found in issue 2 of this fanzine, as is the sector map we did in the 1990s.



Given elements of the original draft Meshan CT Library Data was based on the same mistake, a lot of rework was anticipated. The Sector book went through 3 rounds of edits with with 3 editors in total each round. We got close, but sadly the project collapsed for several different reasons at this point. So yes, we were close as a team, and it was a shame we could not work through the difficulties at the time, because that book could have made it to market very easily. And a pivot for Library Data wouldn't have been far behind. It would have been substantially bigger than the book we released ourselves recently.

If Marc Miller is happy that Rebellion era borders in Meshan are classic Traveller era borders, then that is canon now.

We will make available both a LBB for both the Classic era and the Rebellion era based on what we received, so everyone knows what data the rest of our team were working with. Both will be free of course. We also intend to deliver a 3rd LBB - namely of the TNE version for the sector. The Meshan Saga had published a lot of the sector across that period, but much of this was work by the departed author.



I need to be be clear and say after Tokho subsector, that author ran rampant over the work of many others in the team with lots of work of others wiped out. This means the rest of the team's work isn't represented in TNE Meshan work we published for a while. Around that time HIWG NZ Meshan team work collapsed until resurrected with the CT publishing deal.

Also that departed author left one subsector undone as a land grant, so the sector was left unfinished for TNE.

So we will publish a LBB for TNE that brings back all the work lost - to represent what was the collective vision before the unfortunate erasure occurred. We'll also complete the missing subsector.

From us, past TMS issues have the work of that departed author redacted, but originals are out there somewhere, as are some other HIWG NZ docs to unearth that departed authors work. You the Traveller punter can decide what to accept or reject from any contradictions. That TNE LBB will identify some of the contributors in the collectors sites for the work that was erased.



## Meshan Merchants & Corsairs



This ship book was largely meant to be in the style of the classic Traders & Gunboats. A manuscript shell based on the surrounding text from Traders & Gunboats adapted for Vargr ship encounters and some other bits and pieces did exist. And at least a couple of basic ship designs were assembled and submitted from the departed author.

While that material was withdrawn, we are releasing a small LBB based on this book concept - but really it is just a catalogue of what was lost, some design idea sketches from another contributor and some designs that existed in parts of the sector during the TNE era. It is not to the degree of a full supplement, but it does fill in some gaps for those wanting to use the sector.

## Ethically Challenged Merchants

This was meant to be the book to deliver an adventure or a series of small adventures to introduce gamers to the Meshan sector and give them a taste for the mixed cultural blending between humans and Vargr in the sector.

A cover brief and concept was sketched by the primary author, but was never commissioned by me in the end. It was to be a design with both a back and front cover illustration - giving two different views of the same scene. No draft manuscript shell was ever submitted to me. I had worked up a LBB style cover for it as a backup and it is shown here for what might have been.

The original author did work on TNE scenarios, and even ran at least one with a gaming group. There may have been material created for CT that was created, but never presented before he departed.



This is one of the LBBs we will likely never publish given the hole we have for materials. Some of the world books presented by Philip Warnes have ideas for scenarios you can use for TNE and you could certainly use the world information to frame up a scenario for the classic era. But we don't have anything to publish a Meshan CT adventure guide from.

Other potential titles may be delivered, but may be fragments of our work. Further TMS issues will explore what doesn't fit well in LBB format.

That departed author had material for several other world sites. Some were published in earlier TMS issues, while some remained hand written in the early days of the TNE project.

It is always sad to reflect back on projects where teams fall apart. We weren't the only breakup in Traveller circles, and likely not the last.

We wanted to be fair to punters and let you know as briefly (and hopefully) as non-controversially as possible an idea of where the project got to before it halted. Hopefully with the effort we are putting in recently and into the future to bring something to the community free of charge (taking time out from our own commercial interests), you'll have something to help enrich your gaming in an area we once worked in. And we also hope we've given you clues on what the departed author has that might surface in the future, or where to find those that are out there now.

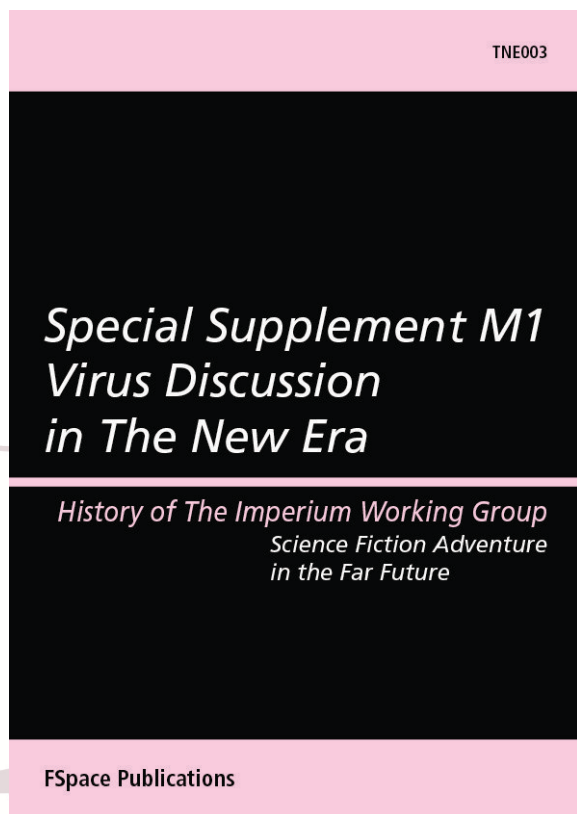
## Look out for Philip Warne's Traveller titles



Visit [www.fspacerpg.com](http://www.fspacerpg.com) for more details on where to obtain these.

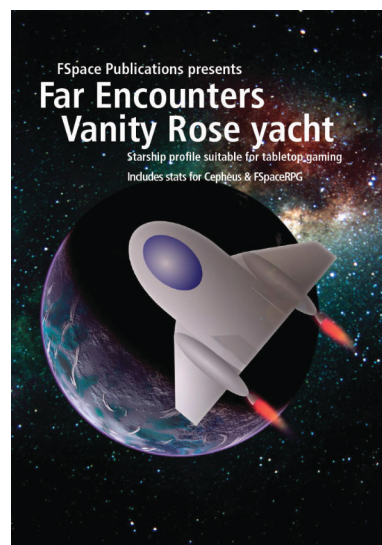
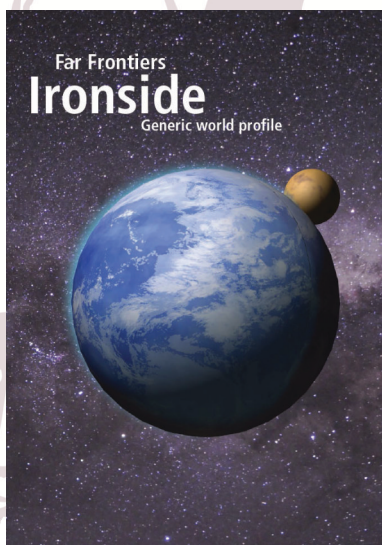
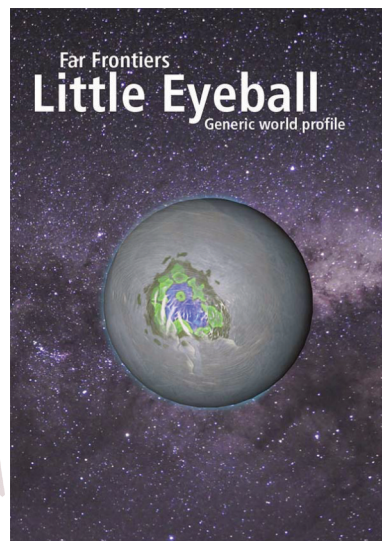
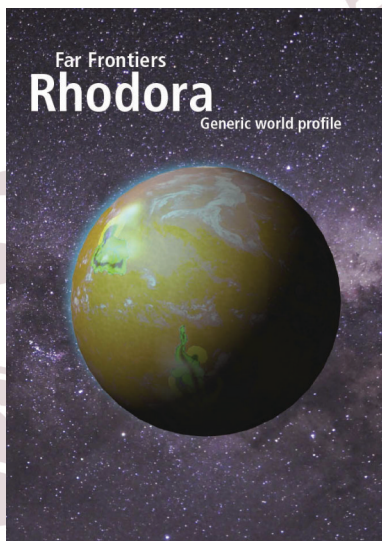
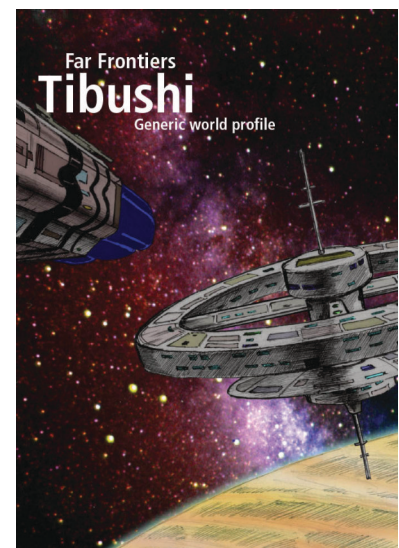
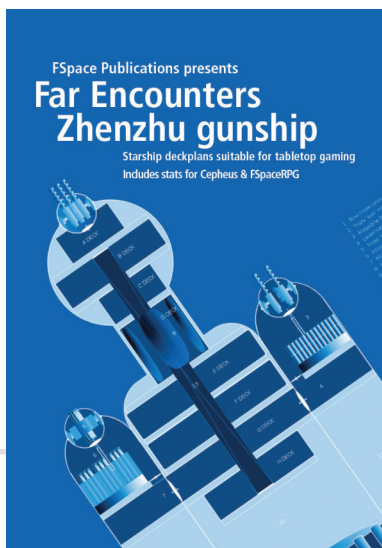


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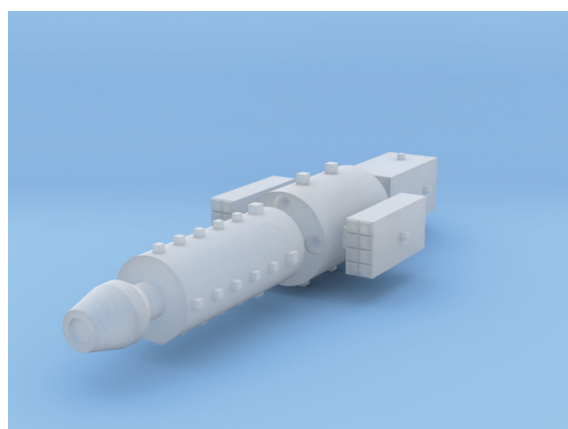
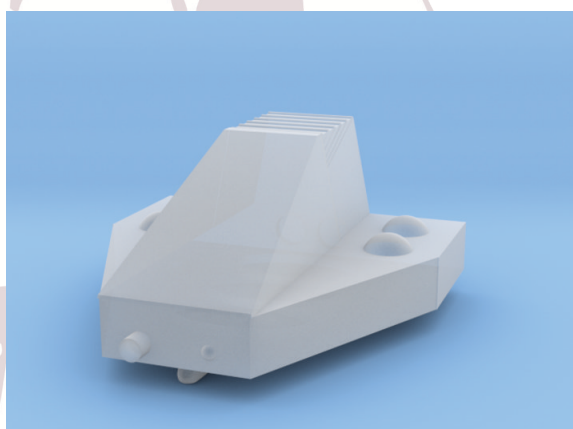
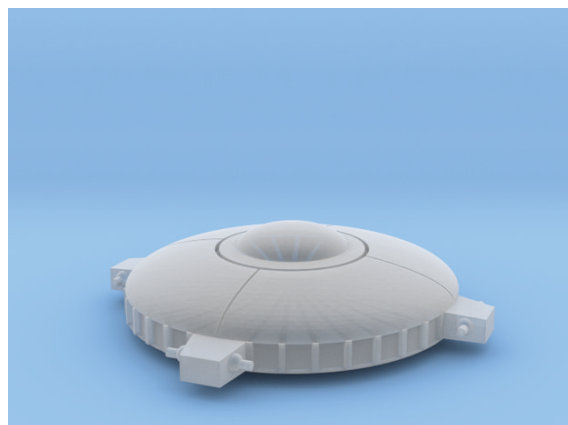
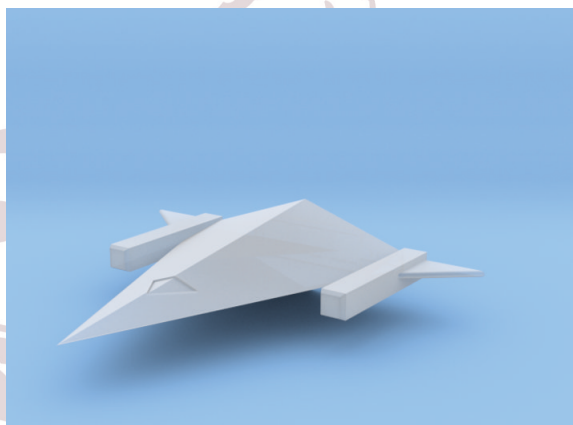
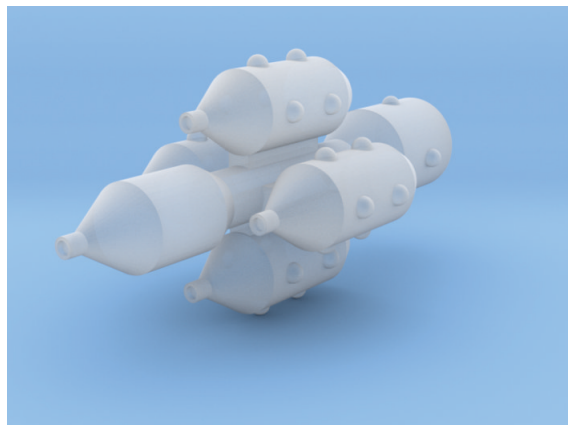
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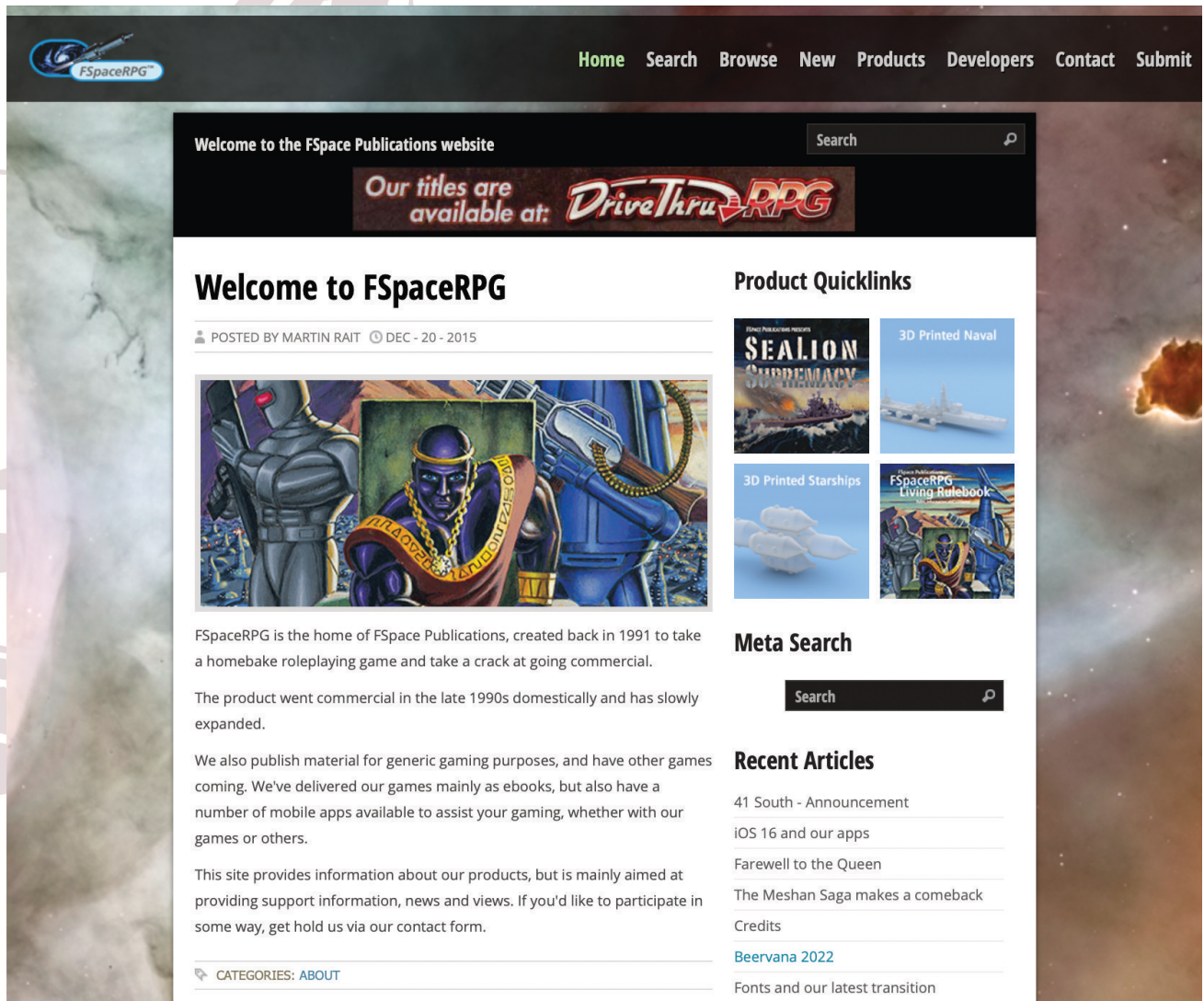


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